

RIDERS OF THE STARS

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HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

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By H. H. Knibbs

RIDERS OF THE STARS.

SUNDOWN SLIM. Illustrated.

SONGS OF THE OUTLANDS. Tales of the
Hoboes and Other Verse.

OVERLAND RED. A Tale of the Moonstone
Cañon Trail. Illustrated in Color.

STEPHEN MARCH'S WAY. Illustrated.

LOST FARM CAMP. Illustrated.

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Riders of the Stars

Riders of the Stars

A BOOK OF WESTERN VERSE

By

Henry Herbert Knibbs



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TO R. F.

*Men know him for sterling worth,
For vigor and pride and wit;
He who girdled the glowing earth
And fashioned a song of it.
Men know him of many things
Master, in hall and mart,
But I, yea, I know the voice that sings
Deep in his steadfast heart.*

*His shield to the world I know,
And his toil-worn coat of mail,
The clear, keen eye with the battle glow
When hazard or wrong assail;
Proud is my heart that I
See more than the passing see
In his love for the magic western sky
And the mountains' wizardry;*

*Rifle and rope and spur,
Trail and the wayside fire;
Soul of the true adventurer
Singing his heart's desire
E'en while the great wheels roll
Ceaseless and grim and slow;*

To R. F.

*But the gods of gold may not grind his soul
Into the dust below.*

Fetters that bind his hands

*He snaps with a magic word,
As fearless, frank, and immune he stands
Singing of trail and herd,
Night, and the Southern stars,
Dawn and a land of gold!
Leading souls through their prison-bars,
Bidding their eyes behold!*

Men know him for sterling worth,

*For vigor and pride and wit
To challenge tears or the leap of mirth
As he strikes to the soul of it.*

Men know him for many things;

*I, standing alone, apart,
Know that an unknown poet sings
Deep in his steadfast heart.*

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Riders of the Stars



THE SHALLOWS OF THE FORD

Did you ever wait for daylight when the stars along the
river

Floated thick and white as snowflakes in the water deep
and strange,

Till a whisper through the aspens made the current break
and shiver

As the frosty edge of morning seemed to melt and spread
and change?

Once I waited, almost wishing that the dawn would never
find me;

Saw the sun roll up the ranges like the glory of the Lord;
Was about to wake my partner who was sleeping close
behind me,

When I saw the man we wanted spur his pony to the
ford.

Saw the ripples of the shallows and the muddy streaks that
followed,

As the pony stumbled toward me in the narrows of the
bend;

Saw the face I used to welcome, wild and watchful, lined
and hollowed;

And God knows I wished to warn him, for I once had
called him friend.

Riders of the Stars

But an oath had come between us — I was paid by Law
and Order;

He was outlaw, rustler, killer — so the border whisper ran;
Left his word in Caliente that he'd cross the Rio border . . .

Call me coward? But I hailed him. . . . "Riding close
to daylight, Dan!"

Just a hair and he'd have got me, but my voice, and not
the warning,

Caught his hand and held him steady; then he nodded,
spoke my name,

Reined his pony round and fanned it in the bright and
silent morning,

Back across the sunlit Rio up the trail on which he came.

He had passed his word to cross it — I had passed my
word to get him —

We broke even and we knew it; 't was a case of give-
and-take

For old times. I could have killed him from the brush;
instead, I let him

Ride his trail. . . . I turned . . . my partner flung his arm
and stretched awake;

Saw me standing in the open; pulled his gun and came be-
side me;

Asked a question with his shoulder as his left hand
pointed toward

The Shallows of the Ford

Muddy streaks that thinned and vanished . . . not a word,
but hard he eyed me

As the water cleared and sparkled in the shallows of the
ford.

RIDERS OF THE STARS

TWENTY abreast down the Golden Street ten thousand
riders marched;

Bow-legged boys in their swinging chaps, all clumsily
keeping time;

And the Angel Host to the lone, last ghost their delicate
eyebrows arched

As the swaggering sons of the open range drew up to the
Throne Sublime.

Gaunt and grizzled, a Texas man from out of the concourse
strode,

And doffed his hat with a rude, rough grace, then lifted
his eagle head;

The sunlit air on his silvered hair and the bronze of his
visage glowed;

"Marster, the boys have a talk to make on the things
up here," he said.

A hush ran over the waiting throng as the Cherubim
replied:

"He that readeth the hearts of men He deemeth your
challenge strange,

Though He long hath known that ye crave your own, that
ye would not walk but ride,

Oh, restless sons of the ancient earth, ye men of the
open range!"

Riders of the Stars

Then warily spake the Texas man: "A petition and no complaint

We here present, if the Law allows and the Marster He thinks it fit;

We-all agree to the things that be, but we're longing for things that ain't,

So we took a vote and we made a plan and here is the plan we writ: —

"Give us a range and our horses and ropes; open the Pearly Gate,

And turn us loose in the unfenced blue riding the sunset rounds,

Hunting each stray in the Milky Way and running the Rancho straight;

Not crowding the dogie stars too much on their way to the bedding-grounds.

"Maverick comets that 's running wild, we'll rope 'em and brand 'em fair,

So they 'll quit stampeding the starry herd and scaring the folks below,

And we 'll save 'em prime for the round-up time and we riders 'll all be there,

Ready and willing to do our work as we did in the long ago.

"We've studied the Ancient Landmarks, Sir; Taurus, the Bear, and Mars,

Riders of the Stars

*And Venus a-smiling across the west as bright as a burn-
ing coal,
Plain to guide as we punchers ride night-herding the little
stars,
With Saturn's rings for our home corral and the Dipper
our water-hole.*

*“Here, we have nothing to do but yarn of the days that have
long gone by,
And our singing it does n't fit in up here, though we tried it
for old-time's sake;
Our hands are itching to swing a rope and our legs are stiff;
that 's why
We ask you, Marster, to turn us loose — just give us an
even break!’”*

Then the Lord He spake to the Cherubim, and this was
His kindly word:
“He that keepeth the threefold keys shall open and let
them go;
Turn these men to their work again to ride with the starry
herd;
My glory sings in the toil they crave; 't is their right.
I would have it so.”

Have you heard in the starlit dusk of eve when the lone
coyotes roam,

Riders of the Stars

The *Yip! Yip! Yip!* of a hunting-cry, and the echo that
shrilled afar,
As you listened still on a desert hill and gazed at the
twinkling dome,
And a viewless rider swept the sky on the trail of a shoot-
ing star?

LARGO

BOUGHT him of the Navajos — shadow of a pony,
Over near the Largo draw, runnin' up and down;
Twenty pesos turned the trick — broke me cold and stony;
Then I set to figure as I rambled into town.

'Fore I had the feel of him, twice he like to throwed me;
He did n't have to figure sums 'cause he was n't broke;
Then he took to runnin' and unknowin'-like, he showed me
Speed that was surprisin' in a twenty-dollar joke.

Wiry little Navajo, no bigger than a minute;
Did a heap of restin' up when he got the chance,
But . . . ever stop a pin-wheel just to locate what was in it,
Findin' unexpected you was settin' on your pants?

That was him — the Largo hoss; did n't take to schoolin';
Relayed out of Calient' into Santa Fé;
Fifty mile of kickin' sand and not a wink of foolin'
When he hit the desert trail windin' down that way.

Once they put a blooded hoss on the trail behind him;
Passed me like a Kansas blow; Largo did n't mind,
Kept a-runnin' strong and sweet. Reckoned that we'd
find him
Like we did, in twenty mile, busted, broke, and blind.

Largo

Ever see a Injun race? Times I could 'a' sold him
For a dozen cattle — a most interestin' price;
Set to figurin' ag'in — bought the mare that foaled him.
Shucks! Her colts they could n't beat a herd of hobbled
mice.

Took the brush and curry-comb — thought he'd under-
stand it . . .

Him a-loafin' lazy with his nose across the bars;
Reckon dudes comes natural; as hard as he could land it,
He druv home his opinion while I gathered up the stars.

That was him — the Largo hoss; never saw another
Desert hoss could beat him when he started out to float.
Pedigree? He had n't none; a pony was his mother,
And judgin' from his looks I guess his father was a goat.

That's him now a-standin' there, sleepy-like and dreamin';
Sell him? Thought you'd ask me that. Northern mail is
late

Just three hours. No, not to-day, pardner. Without seemin'
Brash — from here to Santa Fé we'll wipe it off the slate.

Bought him of the Navajos — broke me cold and stony;
But I got a roll to-day — tell you what I'll do —
Ridin' south? Well, pardner, I'll just give you that there
pony,
If we ain't in Santa Fé three hours ahead of you.

[CHANCE

SIXTY miles from a homestead, straight as the crow can fly,

We camped in the Deadwood foothills. Mineral? Yes — and gold.

Three of us in the outfit; the burro and Chance and I;

Chance was n't more than a pup then, goin' on two year old.

Already he knew the music that a desert rattler makes

When, glimmerin' under a yucca, he'd seen 'em coil to spring;

But he did n't need no teachin' to keep him away from snakes;

' You should seen his tail go under when he heard a rattler sing!

Town-folks called him the "Killer," and I reckon that they was right;

Deep in the chest, wolf-muscled, and quicker than fire in tow;

But one of the kind that never went out of his way to fight,

Though he'd tackle a corral of wild-cats if I gave him the word to go.

Chance

There was more to him than his fightin' — he was wise; it
was right good fun

To see him usin' his head-piece when the sun was a-fryin'
eggs,

Trailin' along with the outfit and cheatin' the desert sun
By keepin' into the shadow right clost to my burro's
legs.

I knew that some day I'd lose him, for the desert she don't
wait long; —

Hosses and dogs and humans, none of 'em get too old;
Gold? Looks good in a story and sounds right good in a
song,

But the men that go out and get it — they know what
they pay for gold!

If I struck a ledge that showed me a million, — the whole
thing mine, —

I'd turn it over to-morrow (and never so much as glance
At the papers the law-sharks frame up and hand you a pen
to sign)

For a look at my old side-pardner, the "Killer," that I
called "Chance."

Why? Well, my eyes, one mornin', was blinkin' to shake a
dream,

And Chance was sleepin' beside me, breathin' it long and
deep,

Riders of the Stars

When I saw a awful somethin' and I felt I was like to
scream . . .

There was a big, brown rattler coiled in my arm,
asleep.

Move . . . and I knew he'd get me. Waitin', I held my
breath,

Feelin' the sun get warmer, wonderin' what to do,
Tryin' to keep my eyes off that shinin' and sudden death,
When Chance he lifted his head up and slow come the
rattler's, too.

"Take him!" I tried to whisper. Mebby I did. I know
Chance's neck was a-bristle and his eyes on the coiled-up
snake;

Its head was a-movin' gentle — like weeds when the south
winds blow,

When Chance jumped in . . . the "Killer" . . . Do
that for a pardner's sake?

I'd like to think that *I'd* do it! . . . Up there in the far-off
blue

Old Marster He sits a-jedgin' such things. Can you tell
me why,

Knowin' what he had comin', he went at it fightin'-
true;

Tore that snake into ribbons, then crawled to the brush
to die?

Chance

Never come near me after; knew that he'd got his call;
Howcome I went and shot him. God! I can see his
eyes!
See where those pointed shadows run down that cañon
wall?
That there's his tombstone, stranger, bigger than money
buys.

MESA MAGIC

"Speakin' general of hosses, in a kind of offhand way," —

See the mesa stealing splendor from the magic of the sun,
And the flowers nodding in the grass like children at their
play, —

"That there Toby hoss of mine was lots of fun."

*"Just how much that hoss could sabe — 'course he could n't
read, but, well," —*

While the mountain shadows mingling lay like pools
above the sand,
As the gentle Padre climbs the stair to ring the mission
bell, —

"That there Toby hoss could always understand."

*"Did you ever know a hoss to fall in love? Some funny,
too," —*

Making music o'er the silence of the eventide, aglow
With the Spanish girls' serapes, red and yellow, pink and
blue, —

"Yes, that Toby hoss he set up for a beau."

*"He used to come and nicker soft, a-peekin' through the
bars," —*

Till the pretty colors vanish in the swift and starry
change

Mesa Magic

Of the sky from blue to velvet-black and silver flame of
stars, —

“At a lady-hoss he fancied on the range.”

*“He’d act pow’ful polite and bow his head — to get some
grass,” —*

Desert magic and the mystery of an Arizona night,
While across the brown adobes flitting shadows form and
pass; —

“There is no use talkin’, Toby was polite.”

*“But that lady-hoss was scornful, fat, and acted like a
goat,” —*

Dancing shadows of the pepper-tree by desert breeze
caressed,
While the little owl awakens with his hushed and plaintive
note, —

“But of all the hosses, Toby liked her best.”

*“‘T was a interestin’ courtin’, with the line-fence in be-
tween,” —*

To the moonlight like a faëry mist upon the mesa
spread,
And the world is but a bubble in the soft and silver
sheen, —

“Say, I reckon you ain’t heard a word I said.”

THE DESERT

'T WAS the lean coyote told me, baring his slavish soul,
As I counted the ribs of my dead cayuse and cursed at
the desert sky,
The tale of the upland rider's fate, while I dug in the water-
hole
For a taste, a drop of the bitter seep; but the water-hole
was dry.

"He came," said the lean coyote, "and cursed as his pony
fell,
And he counted his pony's ribs aloud; yea, even as you
have done;
He raved as he ripped at the clay-red sand like an imp from
the pit of hell,
Shriveled with thirst for a thousand years and craving a
drop — just one."

"His name?" I asked; and he answered, yawning to hide
a grin;
"His name is writ on the prison-roll and many a place
beside;
And last he scribbled it on the sand with a finger seared and
thin,
And I watched his face as he spelled it out and laughed,
as I laughed, and died.

The Desert

“And thus,” said the lean coyote, “his need is the hungry’s
feast,

And mine.” I fumbled and pulled my gun and emptied
it wild and fast,

But one of the crazy shots went home and silenced the
waiting beast;

There lay the shape of the Liar, dead; ’t was I that
should laugh the last.

Laugh? Nay, now I would write my name as the upland
rider wrote.

Write? What need? For before my eyes was a wide and
wavering line;

I saw the trace of a written word and letter by letter float
Into the mist as the world grew dark; and I knew that
the name was mine.

Dreams and visions within the dream; turmoil and fire
and pain;

Hands that proffered a brimming cup, empty ere I could
take;

Then the burst of a thunder-head; rain! it was rude fierce
rain!

Blindly down to the hole I crept, shivering, drenched,
awake!

Dawn; and I saw the red-rimmed sun scattering golden
flame,

Riders of the Stars

As stumbling down to the water-hole came the horse that

I thought was dead!

But never a sign of the other beast nor the trace of a rider's
name;

Just a rain-washed track and an empty gun; and the old
home trail ahead.

LAST OF THE CAVALIERS

NEVERMORE shall the ranges ring as once when ye loped
along;

Only the timid echoes sing old memories of your song;
Now what need that ye ride the line numb in the winter
snow?

Fallen the far-seen upland pine; fenced are the plains
below.

Out where the lone coyote shrills, limned on the desert
sand,

Under the moon of the eastern hills baring that ghostly
land,

Gleams the rim of the water-hole, white, with no print of
hoof;

Ye would not know that yon shadowed knoll is the ridge of
a nester's roof.

Still in Sonora's market-place gather the laughing
girls,

Each a rose in the ebon lace filming her dusky curls;
Gay serape and eyes alight with the glint of a southern
pride

Born of a kiss in the summer night: wondering where ye
ride.

Riders of the Stars

Ye rode singing down a thousand trails, drifting from
change to change,
Dreaming of where the eagle sails over the open range;
Proud, ye held to your heart's desire scorning the newer
years,
Lost in the glow of the sunset fire . . . last of the Cavaliers.

So ye went to your unknown end, answering jest with jest,
Recking naught where the trail might wend, men of the
Golden West,
Spurring a rein-loose race with Chance, riding it hard and
straight,
Living, unguessed, the True Romance — daring to love
and hate.

*Have ye dreamed of the mesa grass starred with the flower of
blue;
Morning haze in the mountain-pass, sage in the silver dew?
Blush of the manzanita bloom, bud of the almond tree,
Yucca hid in the cañon gloom; drone of the questing bee?*

Now and ye ride in the sunset glow e'en as ye did of old,
Twain and twain as ye used to go, brave in a flare of
gold,
Each his law; and all unamazed, facing the phantom
plains,
Foot clear home and an arm upraised to the music of bridle-
reins!

THE FAR AND LONELY HILL

OVER on the Malibu we rode the range together; |
Three as lively buckaroos as ever forked a hoss;
Playin' jokes and singin' songs in every kind of weather,
And anything we tackled — why, it had to come across.

*Sage a-shinin' in the rain; sun just breakin' cover;
Tail-to-wind the ponies standin' thoughtful-like and still,
While across the mornin' comes the cheepin' of the plover
Hidin' in the shadow of the far and lonely hill.*

Funny, how we never saw that it was drawin' nearer;
Edgin' closer every day that lonely hill it came;
Wakin' in the sunshine we could see it big and clearer,
But we kept a-ridin' and a-singin' just the same.

Little owls a-lookin' back solemn-like and blinkin';
Sunlight dancin' on the sand and burnin' out the
grass;
Summer . . . round the water-hole the crowdin' steers all
drinkin',
Just before we push 'em to the range beyond the pass.

Seems we did n't sing so much; ropes they did the singin';
Ponies' feet they played the tune; other riders told

Riders of the Stars

All the yarns and sprung the jokes and kept the laugh
a-ringin' . . .

Even then we did n't know that we was growin' old.

Two of us was left to ride the Malibu together;
And sittin' by the fire at night so solemn-like and still,
We began to notice every little change of weather,
Shiverin' in the shadow of the far and lonely hill.

Knew we had to climb it — knew the trail was mighty
narrow;

Made a hand-shake on it that the next to go that way
Would kind of blaze the turns with our old brand "The
Double-Arrow,"

So the last to follow would n't lose the trail and stray.

.
Down below I see the herd and dust a-rollin' nigher;
Mornin' on the Malibu where once we used to ride;
Pony's frettin' on the bit — we can't go any higher;
I reckon if we got to go, it's down the other side.

*Sage a-shinin' in the sun that 's just a-breakin' cover;
All around the ranges loomin' high and cold and still,
As from the Other Valley comes the cheepin' of the plover,
And I see the Double-Arrow pointin' down the lonely hill.*

THE RANGER AND THE BEAR

UP in the high Sierras, where they overlook the Kern,
There's a trail on the edge of nothing, and a mile by the
plumb, below,
Is a tomb for the upland rider that is fool enough to
turn
His hoss till he reaches the meadows beyond where the
mountain-daisies grow.

The sun was painting the eastern peaks with a kind of
running fire,
But a morning chill was in the air as keen as an eagle's
claw;
I was riding slouched and easy-like and singing of heart's
desire,
When my pony stopped, though the rein was slack, and
my singing stopped; I saw

Black on the cliff a something bigger than any man;
Blur . . . 't was a old she-grizzly blocking the trail
ahead;
She talked to the cubs beside her and they turned at her
growl and ran
As my hand slid down to my holster; but I changed my
mind; instead

Riders of the Stars

I off of my hoss, stepped forward and raising my hat polite
(But I raised my hat left-handed, my right being filled
and pat)

I said to that old bear-lady: "Now it is n't my wish to
fight,

Or I'd set to fanning my six-gun 'stead of tipping to you
my hat."

And, pardner, would you believe it! she dropped to the
ledge and swung . . .

Turned where a hoss could n't make it and took after
them cubs of hern;

I stood there looking foolish where a bunch of them blue
flowers hung

Over the edge of nothing, smiling down on the river
Kern.

My cayuse was a-shaking and sweating; he was chilly —
and so was I,

Howcome, I swung to the saddle and got him a-moving
slow,

But I quit my glass-eyed gazing at the colors across the sky
And took to surveying the landscape just ahead, where
we had to go.

Mebby a half-hour later we was pushing across the line

Where the rock joins on to the timber when I spied a few
rods away

The Ranger and the Bear

The back of that old she-grizzly; I went for that gun of mine;

Then, thinks I, *she* is minding her business; so I'll tend to my own, to-day.

Just a-guarding her headstrong young ones; doing the best she can;

Willing to do the wise thing; game, but not looking for fight;

Pretty good rule for a human. . . . Oh, I guess I'm an easy man,

But the grizzly and me broke even, 'cause the both of us was polite.

SUNLIGHT

SUNLIGHT, a colt from the ranges, glossy and gentle and strong,

Dazed by the multiple thunder of wheels and the thrust of the sea,

Fretted and chafed at the changes — ah, but the journey was long!

Officer's charger — a wonder — pick of the stables was he.

Flutter of flags in the harbor; rumble of guns in the street;
England! and rhythm of marching; mist and the swing of the tide;

France and an Oriflamme arbor of lilies that drooped in the heat;

Sunlight, with mighty neck arching, flecked with the foam of his pride!

Out from the trenches retreating, weary and grimy and worn,

Lean little men paused to cheer him, turning to pass to their rest;

Shrilled him a pitiful greeting, mocking the promise of morn

With hope and wild laughter to hear him answer with challenging zest.

Sunlight

Victory! That was the spirit! Once *they* had answered the
thrill;

Toiled at the guns while incessant sang that invisible,
dread

Burden of death. Ah, to hear it, merciless, animate, shrill,
Whining aloft in a crescent, shattering living and dead!

And Sunlight? What knew he of battle? Strange was this
turmoil and haste.

Why should he flinch at the firing; swerve at the man-
gled and slain?

Where was the range and the cattle? Here was but carnage
and waste;

Yet with a patience untiring he answered to spur and to
rein.

Answered, when, out of disorder, rout, and the chaos of
night,

Came the command to his master, "Cover the Seventh's
retreat!"

On, toward the flame of the border, into the brunt of the
fight,

Swept that wild wind of disaster, on with the tide of
defeat.

Softly the dawn-wind awaking fluttered a pennant that
fell

Over the semblance of Sunlight, stark in the pitiless day;

Riders of the Stars

Riddled and slashed by the bullets sped from the pit of that
hell . . .

Groaning, his master, beside him, patted his neck where
he lay.

“Sunlight, it was n’t for glory . . . England . . . or France
. . . or the fame

Of victory . . . No . . . not the glowing tribute of his-
tory’s pen.

Good-bye, old chap, for I’m going . . . earned it . . . your
death is the shame . . .

We fought for the world, not an Island. . . . We fought
for the honor of men.”

.

So we have sold them our horses. What shall we do with
the gold?

Lay it on Charity’s altar, purchasing columns of praise?
Noble indeed are our courses; running the race as of old;
But why should we Mammonites falter? Noble indeed
are our ways.

THAT ROAN CAYUSE

COLT she was when I spied her, stray on the open range;
Starvin' poor, for the feed was thin and water-holes far
between.

I roped her and threw and tied her, for I saw she was actin'
strange;
And on her breast was a barb-wire cut — the worst I
have ever seen.

Talk about nursin'! Maybe that hoss was n't raised by
hand!

Boys they joshed when they saddled up and when they
rode in at night;

"S-s-s-h! Don't you wake the baby! Say, can't you
understand —

Cussin' don't go in this horsepital, or Doc'll get mad and
bite!"

Look at her now! Like copper, shinin' and sleek and
strong!

Follow a mountain trail all day and finish a-steppin'
high.

Nothin' out here can stop her, and she lopes like a swallow's
song.

Wicked as fire to a stranger — but as gentle to me as
pie.

Riders of the Stars

Look at her straight-up ears, now, listenin' to you and me!

Her eyes are askin' questions; wonderin' what's to do.
Understands what she hears? Now, watch when I call and
see

How she'll circle around to my side and flatten her ears
at you.

Bronco? Don't pay to quirt her. I'm bronco myself, some
days,

Pitchin' when luck is a-ridin' me hard and pilin' it if I
can.

But a quick, hard word will hurt her — for a hoss has
peculiar ways;

Use any hoss like a human and he'll treat you just like a
man.

You'd ride her? That's not surprisin', for judgin' your legs,
you could.

But flowers are scarce at this time of year and there is n't
a parson nigh.

She sure needs exercisin'; 't would do her a lot of good,

But I'd hate to see you a-flyin', 'cause you ain't built
right to fly.

Remember that old-time sayin', cinched up in a two-bit
rhyme?

"There is n't a hoss that can't be rode." And many a
rider tries,

That Roan Cayuse .

But when it comes to stayin', why, you can't stay every time;

"There is n't a man that can't be throwed" is the place where the song gets wise.

"That roan cayuse of the Concho": when a hoss has a name like that,

You can figure its reputation without askin' another word.

You can roll it up in your poncho, or bury it under your hat,

It's just like that picture-writin' — means lots that you have n't heard.

You straighten them ears up pronto! You, showin' your teeth at me!

Here, now, you quit your bitin' — do you think I'm a bale of hay?

You'd buy her? She heard you say it — ears flat and eye rollin', see!

Well, she is the lady to talk to — and I guess that's your answer, eh?

THE OUTCAST

WITH thrill of birds adown the dawn there came
A golden arrow through the eastern pass,
And in the gold were eyes of amber flame
That burned upon me from the dewy grass.

A wolf-dog, from some distant rancho strayed,
Had made his bed beneath the pepper-tree ;
A great, gray ghost, sore-wounded, lone, afraid,
He growled deep-throated as he glared at me.

With kindly word I lured him from his bed
To proffer food and drink and nearer drew,
But in his eyes I saw affection dead ;
'T was only hate and hunger that he knew.

Poor brute, once brave and fearless as the best,
Faithful to some lost master's kindly hand,
I grieved that I had so disturbed his rest,
As trembling in the sun I saw him stand.

Fearful, and yet assured that in my voice
A friend he knew. He quivered, turned, and then,
As though he had made choice against his choice,
Betook him, limping, to the road again.

The Outcast

Slowly I followed, coaxing, calling, till

The very act of fleeing lent him fear,

Swiftly he climbed the long, low, eastern hill,

Gazed back an instant; turned to disappear;

And still I followed, sick at heart for him,

Sad for the strong, brave brute he once had been,

As in the morning sun my eyes grew dim

To see him stretched again amid the green,

Resting his battered head upon his paws,

Licking his wounds, then glancing wildly round;

Ah, pity that his fear was without cause;

I turned and left him stretched upon the ground

An outcast; but if human love for beast

Has any worth, I prayed that night would send

An easy death. Ah, could he know at least

How much, how much I would have been his friend!

THE KILLER

GOT to kill to live . . . that's right . . .

Trail is mighty hot and dusty;
Sleepin' in the brush at night,
Both my guns a-gettin' rusty;
Sun a-burnin' high and bright,
On the trail to Malachite.

Yonder through the blindin' glare,
Dreamin' down the lazy hours
Stands the 'dobe; and the air
Just plumb rich with scent of flowers!
Roses bloomin' everywhere . . .
Wonder if she's livin' there

Now? I'll light right down and see.
Buenos Dios! Yes, I'm back;
Knew that you'd remember me . . .
Concho outfit's on my track?
Señorita, thanks! I'm goin'
Down to pay the debt that's owin'.

No, I'm goin'. Won't you shake —
Say Adios? For I'll miss you.
Life is short. I always take
What I want, and so, I'll kiss you.
Sho! There's no one 'round to see us;
Just one more and then, Adios!

The Killer

Better ride the other way?

Thanks again. That smile is winnin'.
Sheriff now is your José!

Gosh! That makes a tough beginnin',
But that kiss is worth a fight
Any time, in Malachite.

.
Bronc, you take your drink and I'll

Sift in here and see what's doin'.
Same old sign — "The Forty-Mile" —
Old saloon is most a ruin;
How, Amigo! Some hot day!
Howdy, Pedro! How, José!

Don't get nervous. Have a drink.

Yes, I'm on the job to buy it.
Sho! Why, I can hear you think;
Keep your hands still — don't you try it!
I come friendly . . . Call me, eh?
Take it then, you fool, José.

Had to kill to live . . . The fool

Might 'a' downed his glass of liquor,
But a Chola can't keep cool,
And he knew my hand was quicker,
But he had to call my hand . . .
Wonder if she'll understand?

APUNI OYIS

(BUTTERFLY LODGE)

THERE'S a lodge in Arizona where the rugged pines are
marching

Straight and stalwart up the hillside till they gather on
the crest,

And around their feet the grasses and the purple flowers
are arching

In the dim and golden glamour of the sunlight in the
West.

In the lodge — Apuni Oyis — dwells the Chief who writes
the stories

Of the Blackfeet — mighty hunters in the pleasant days
of old —

Tales of love and war and friendship, tales of mysteries and
glories,

When the prairie moon was silver and the sun was faëry
gold.

And the trails along the mountains, o'er the mesa and the
river,

Lead to far and hidden cañons where the sleeping red
men lie,

Apuni Oyis

Wrapped in silence as above them myriad aspen leaves
aquiver

Whisper secrets to the west wind as the pack-train
ambles by;

Where the swart Apache hunts and dreams of warriors now
a-dreaming;

Where the mountain stream runs swiftly, talking loudly
to the day,

To the rock-rimmed pool and onward as an unexpected
gleaming

Marks the trout that leaps to vanish in a burst of silver
spray:

Trails that climb the rocky fortress of the ridge and have
their ending

In forlorn and ravaged temples of a people all unknown;
Trails we make, and did we know it — on and on forever
blending

With the red man's, toward the sunset — are no clearer
than his own.

Oh, the hills of Arizona in the pleasant autumn weather!

Oh, the lodge—Apuni Oyis—where is happiness and rest!
May the dreams we share come true, and may we live them
all together,

We who love the ancient magic of the mountains of the
West.

THE PEACE OF THE HILLS

Up in the mighty hills where the breeze of the sea
Tosses the purple bells of the budding flowers,
That nod to the musical drone of the questing bee,
When the sun breaks forth in a golden symphony,
And life is not measured by joy or grief or the hours,
There stands a castle splendid with many towers,
Up in the mighty hills.

Its gates are of burnished gold and ivory;
Its roof is jeweled with myriad wonderful stars;
And within is a throne that is veiled in the Mystery;
And the Weaver of Dreams alone has the magic key —
The Weaver of Dreams alone may unlock the bars
Of the palace where never the voice of a mortal mars
The peace of the mighty hills.

Have ye sought for the gates of gold and ivory?
Have ye stooped to the fragrant bells of the budding
flowers?
Have ye followed the musical drone of the questing bee
As the sun broke forth in a golden symphony,
Till life was not measured by joy or grief or the hours?
And so — ye have entered the gates of those magic
towers
And the peace of the mighty hills.

IN THE VALLEY

In the valley of Parnassus where we minor poets ride,
There's a trail meandering upward to the parent-peak
sublime,
And we've seen lone riders pass us as we reined our steeds
aside,
Vowing then that we would make it — given elbow-
room and time.

One by one we've faced the highland, dared the fate of
those that seek,
On and up as rhythmic echoes from the golden heights
were sped;
Faëry sunlight, cloudy island, lofty ledge, and farthest
peak,
Till the trail was lost in midnight and we turned about
and fled.

Hastened back with bridles ringing as we neared the wider
land,
Turned our ponies out to pasture; found a friend to
sympathize
With the tenor of our singing of the beautiful at
hand,
In a rhythm caught from echoes flitting down from rarer
skies.

Riders of the Stars

Yet we'd have no one suppose us all unfitted for the task;
We have failed, but we have tried it, giving brain and
heart and hand
To the triumph (quite like Moses) of our failure; and we
ask
Just to glimpse the smiling splendor of a far and prom-
ised land.

So we sing and oft, in chorus, though each deems the song
his own,
As we ride the pleasant valley spread with starry flowers
of blue;
We've Parnassus still before us, high and splendid, proud
and lone,
And the solid satisfaction of a comrade's equal view.

Fame and folk will soon forget us even as we shall forget,
But there still remains Parnassus for the coming ones to
dare;
And — perchance the Muse will let us pluck a stave — or
violet,
As we pass beyond the valley and dissolve in upper air.

THE QUEST

MORNING wakes the meadowlark, adown the field he's
singing,

From out his glowing hermitage of poppies in the grass;
The sunlight shatters on the hills and shreds of mist are
clinging

Athwart the dim and lofty peaks that mark the moun-
tain-pass.

Ah, don't you hear above the song, far, faëry echoes
falling,

Each fainter as a haze of gold rekindles bud and tree;
Low, sweet, and alien melodies, still calling, calling, calling,
Across the long and shadowy slopes that run to meet the
sea?

The fragrance of the purple sage; the trail forever wending
Into the desert dun and wide through haunted lands and
drear;

Communion with the silences and solitudes unending
Are dearer to my heart than love, though love were ever
dear.

You say that you would come with me and find those hid-
den places,

Daring the hazard of the way, whate'er the way betide,

Riders of the Stars

Adventuring to dream the dream of fair, mysterious faces
That haunt the outer loneliness . . . but ne'er where
twain abide.

The dew of tears upon your eyes; your gentle fingers reach-
ing

To clasp the vision ere it melt and mingle with the dawn;
But oh, my dear, the voices call despite your lips be-
seeching;

Love was our monarch yesterday; to-day the king is
gone.

To each alone the voices call; to each his own beholding
Of that diviner Mystery, elusive as the gold

The sun has woven with your hair — a flower of love un-
folding,

But e'en so close I may not touch the Power that bids
unfold.

That which men seek and may not find, for that my heart is
yearning;

Love were less perfect should it chide the soul that fain
would know;

And oh, my dear, the voices call . . . and yours, for my
returning,

Yet through your tears the vision comes . . . and you
have bid me go.

THE GLORIOUS FOOL

CHRIST save me from half-hearted men
Who time their steps by hour and rule;
Who measure life by word and pen,
Too pale of mind to play the fool.

For me the glorious fool that rides
High poised upon the neck of Fate;
Who laughs when palsied censure chides;
Who dares to love, and dares to hate.

Oh, fool, on your adventure trail
That flames across the farthest wave,
The storm that thunders in your sail,
The tide that swings above your grave,

Stars mirrored in the dreamless sea,
White faces of the loves you knew,
Great-hearted men who dare be free,
Chant deathless requiem to you!

Captain of causes lost, forlorn,
Drunk with the glory of the strife,
You met with joy each fighting morn,
Full-throated, drinking deep of life.

Riders of the Stars

Mad lover striding overbold

Through uncompanioned, loveless years,
Still are you victor! Still you hold
The memory of those lips, those tears!

Atom of star-fire, lightly tossed

To the abysmal maw of Time,
Wise men foregathering whisper, "Lost!"
But to their hearts they cry, "Sublime!"

And I? Ah, would that I might these

Rude stanzas shape to worth and rule,
But like to you, I may not please
Half-hearted men, oh, glorious fool!

THE TRAMP

YONDER upon the road he stands:
Ulysses in a modern guise,
Dreaming of undiscovered lands
Beyond the azure of the skies, —
Of some Penelope, whose eyes
Long years of waiting may not dim . . .
Though reason whisper otherwise,
Still, in his heart she waits for him.

To him, no matter what it brings
The game of life is but a jest.
He has no time to seek the things
For which we toil; supreme unrest
Impels him with a wider zest —
Though nonchalant — past all our strife;
True to himself, he stands the test
And as he chooses lives his life.

With smooth contempt we pass him by,
Or patronize him for a space.
His is the larger charity,
With no contempt upon his face;
For he, with somewhat nobler grace,
Endures the sun, the wind, the rain,
And Man . . . How well he knows his place
And turns him to the road again.

Riders of the Stars

Circe may lure him with her smile,
And siren melodies delight
His keen, deliberate ear, the while
He seeks his star and reads aright
The promise of the summer night,
And dawn upon the mountain dim;
He knows that far beyond the height,
Penelope still waits for him.

TRAIL-TO-GLORY

COULD old Trail-to-Glory preach!
Seems he understood this land
Where you have to learn first-hand
 (Without books and such, to teach)
One brand from another brand.

Having nothing much to lose,
When a Sunday come around,
We would squat here on the ground,
 Twenty of us buckaroos,
Never making 'ary sound

While he opened up the ball,
Singing first, then praying low,
Like them little winds that blow
 Sand around the chaparral
Kind of easy-like and slow.

Seemed to us just like a game;
You play this and I'll play that;
Trail-to-Glory standing pat;
 Never working any frame,
Never passing round the hat:

Riders of the Stars

For he warn't out for money, pard,
Had his job, just like the rest,
Riding, roping with the best,
Working hard and sweating hard,
Waiting for that Day of Rest.

When it come *he* changed his clothes;
Seemed to us just like a game,
Staking all on just a Name;
Talking quiet-like to those
That he knew he could n't tame,
Till, one day, the show-down came.

Swung my rope and lass'ed a steer;
Hoss he bucked and I got piled.
Steer come at me frothing wild;
Trail-to-Glory, riding near,
Jumped and saved me, and he smiled.

That was all I knew a spell . . .
Then I saw the boys around
Something stretched out on the ground;
'T want no steer, I knew right well;
Boys a-making nary sound —
Yes; that's all there is to tell.

YEABO'S ADVENTURE

THERE was no other trail to choose, so Yeabo, boldly
venturing,
Struck out across the mesa dim beneath the budding
star,
And twenty happy buckaroos, with wit that needed cen-
suring,
Retailled the joke they played on him, foregathering at
the bar.

Yet Romance, ever kind to those who know not ordered
latitudes,
But follow, wandering where she calls in sun or wind or
rain,
Smiled as he told the world his woes, histrionic in his
attitudes,
As o'er the loom of Chance she drove the shuttle back
again.

And Yeabo, he became her knight and sported strange
habiliment;
Cow-puncher boots, loud spur and chaps, brass-studded
belt, and gun.
And found, to his untold delight, that fear was but a filament
Beneath such trapping, pose or wit, but known to every
one.

Riders of the Stars

He was no poet, yet beguiled the Muse that had rare charm
for him,

And set his pony's feet to verse robust and tinged with
red,

While bland Euterpe frowned and smiled and frowned, but
wished no harm to him

Who dared the heights above the Lamp, where angels
fear to tread.

When Love threw down a golden gage, in sunny land
sequestering,

Poor Yeabo's heart was in his boots — commingled joy
and gloom,

As there athwart his pilgrimage with Andalusian gesturing
The immemorial Eve appeared, bedecked in almond-
bloom.

Then came the battle; all too soon the range reëchoed,
thundering,

As nimble six-guns leapt and spake peremptorily and
loud;

A jest, a laugh inopportune; then bickering and blundering
That launched the hate as lightning leaps from cloud
oppressing cloud.

Yet naught may veil the sun for long; and Yeabo, from his
pondering,

Rose valiant, riding many a mile to woo in concrete guise

Yeabo's Adventure

The Spanish lady of his choice, the dream-girl of his wandering,

His dusky rose with slow, sweet smile and soft, alluring eyes.

He married her and settled down; Romance and Love were kind to him;

He ceased to rope the running steer and took to baling hay;

Nor Fame nor Fortune cared he for, and they, who first were blind to him,

Ran hand-in-hand to hunt him out, down Arizona way.

THE SHEEP

AN undulating, dusty patch, they move
Along the margin of the cañon stream.

Beside the herder stand the watchful dogs,
With ears alert and eyes that read his face.

He sees his semblance by the midday sun
Dwarfed on the glaring sand.

The sheep move on
And vanish in the slumbrous cedar shade.
The drowsy lizard blinks in noon elysium;
A bee clings to the nodding mountain flower
Unfearful o'er the sunlit faëry vale
Far, far below; green isles of tiny trees
Dappling a sea of palpitating sand.

Slow-paced the hours; yet swift the twilight change;
A flare of opal spaces in the west,
Shot with a crimson triumph. Then, the night;
Low call and plaintive answer, till the sheep
Lie bedded round the fire — and Silence dreams.

Star after star is blotted from the mask,
And quick, cool fingers lift the wavering veil
That hangs above the cañon's dusky brim.

The Sheep

The morning hills awake and rise to view
The mesa-reaches sprinkled o'er with bloom;
The Shepherd of the Dawn has loosed his flock
Of silvery sheep to graze celestial pastures,
While, plunging, rears the sun, a golden ram
Who leaps the fiery confines of his fold
Whereon hang curling shreds of snowy fleece
Torn from his eager sides.

The cañon stream,
Unruffled, bears the aspect of the sky;
Filches a floating cloud that drifts across
The mirrored foliage twinkling in the deep
Cool gardens of its placid underworld.

The dogs are up and out. The shuffling flock
Pours from the bedding-ground, and, grazing, wends
Down to the foot-worn shallows.

Against the blue
Lone on the height the shepherd hums a song.

EH, JOHNNY-JO?

JUST turn me loose on them hills a spell!

Hear the rein-chains jingle and saddle creak?
And after chuck, that there pack-horse bell

'Way off, jing-janglin'; hear it speak?

Say, a minute of that is worth a week

In town. . . . And the wind is driftin' slow,
A-pilin' the sand round the chaparral

And them dam' coyotes singin' all
Together.

It's great, ain't it, Johnny-Jo?

But, whoa! I must shine up my langwidge some,

This ain't no round-up; this here is verse
That's a-lopin' along and it's got to come,

Like the parson says, "For good or worse."
So I'll clamp my knees and just let her hum.

The wind of the dawn has swept the plains,

And the sun runs over the purple sage.
Gone is the wrack of the winter rains,

Leaving the hills like a faëry page
Of a book that is old, but is ever new,

And fresh as the wild-flowers sweet with dew . . .
Gosh! I'm ridin' close to the fence and low,
And strainin' my buttins, eh, Johnny-Jo?

Eh, Johnny-Jo?

It ain't no use for to talk like that;

It's second-hand scenery made to print.

Just hand me my ole gray puncher hat

And them spurs and quirt; do you get the hint?

For I *got* to ride easy with elbows high,

Mebby not style, but she sure has go;

We'll all git to Heaven by-and-by,

But we'll travel outdoors; eh, Johnny-Jo?

TOBY

HAVE you ever heard a fellow talking nonsense to a hoss,
When he'd stopped to pull a cincha tight or take a little
rest?

Have you ever seen that same cayuse stand looking at his
boss

With eyes that seemed to say, "I like you best."

Well, my bronco, little Toby, he had eyes that talked like
that;

We got pretty well acquainted; understood each other
right

As we traveled hills and mesas; he as nimble as a cat
On the stiffest trail that ever came in sight.

It was: "Toby, come, we'll beat it to the reservation line;
Three line-riders over yonder; if they see us we're in
wrong . . ."

Then the pace that Toby'd set 'em o'er the grass and
through the pine,

Made the wind that whistled by sound like a song.

In the camp he'd browse at night around his picket, by the
fire;

Stop to raise his head and watch me like an interested
kid;

Toby

In the morning he would nicker; seemed to say, "Let's take
a flyer,
Let's go somewhere"; and you bet your boots, we
did.

Just how much that hoss could sabe, — well, I can't ex-
actly say;

But I told him once of Yuma, the cayuse I left behind
When I hit the dry and dusty coming Arizona way;
Told him she was just another of his kind.

Well, his eyes they did the talking, shining big and round
and bright,

Said "I'd like to meet the lady with the blue and glassy
eye;

Never been in California, but if you are talking right,
She's a peach; and is she married? Is she shy?"

I told him she was single, fat and pinto, — kind of fair;
Full of ginger and affection that got badly mixed at
times;

That she never frizzed her mane or brushed her teeth or
combed her hair,

But that she was celebrated in some rhymes.

He seemed quite interested; and her Arizona name
Being "Yuma" set him thinking that my she-cayuse was
great;

Riders of the Stars

But he never showed him jealous, being wise and kind and
game,

When I talked about our California state.

But since then he's acted offish with the hosses on the
range;

Nothing mean, but kind of proud-like; kept his place and
stayed away

From their runs and fights and dinners; mebbby now you'll
think it strange

If I tell you what I heard that Toby say

To the mountain-bred cayuses when they dared to ask him
why;

— "Oh," said Toby, "pretty weather, just like California
air;

Must excuse me, but a lady with a blue and glassy eye —
Boss's friend — is waiting for me, over there."

THAT INSIDE SONG

Bo, it's goin' to be hot all right!

Sun's a-floodin' the eastern range.

Mebby the camp was some cold last night,

But there's nothin' like havin' a little change,
Not money . . . but just lots of room for me,

Hills and mountains and plains and such,
For the eyes that I got they were made to see,
And my ears to hear, but they don't hear much;
Only a kind of a inside song,

Like when the grasshopper's feelin' glad,
Singin', "Rickety-click, and there's nothin' wrong!"
And — after the coffee, things ain't so bad.

The wind is makin' my bed for me,

Smoothin' the grass where I'm goin' to flop,
When the quail roosts up in the live-oak tree,
And my legs feel like as they want to stop.

Pal or no pal it's about the same,

For nobody knows how you feel inside;
Hittin' the grit is a lonesome game —

But quit? No matter how hard I tried.
Oh, mebbly I will when that inside song

Quits a-handin' me out the glad,
Singin', "Buckle-em-up, for there's nothin' wrong!"
. . . And — after the coffee it ain't so bad.

Riders of the Stars

Bo, I've beat it from Los to Maine,
And then, not knowin' just what to do,
I turned and slippered it back again,
Wantin' to see — just the same as you.
Ridin' rods and a-dodgin' flies;
Eatin' at times, when my luck was good;
Speilin' the con to the easy guys
But never just makin' it understood,
Even to me, why that inside song
Keeps a-handin' me out the glad
Singin', "Ramble along, for there's nothin' wrong!"
. . . And — after the coffee things ain't so bad.

THE OLD-TIMER

MORNING on the Malibu, mist across the ranges;
Ponies bucking everywhere. "Whoop! and let 'er
buck!

Bud is standin' on his head; Bill is makin' changes
In his style of cussin' and he's havin' plenty luck."

"When it comes to ridin' brones — listen to me, stranger —
Takes a hoss what is a hoss to pile your Uncle Jim;
Whoa! You think you're goin' to dump a ole-time Texas
Ranger?

Just excuse me for a spell; I'll take it out of *him*.

"Hump, you side of bacon, you! Spin till you git dizzy!
I could roll a cigarette while you are doin' such.
Mebby now you think that you are keepin' me right
busy?

Wish't I had my knittin', for you don't amount to
much.

"As I was sayin', stranger — Whump! Now, ding that
pinto devil!

Gosh-and-what-goes-with-it, but he piled me sure
enough;

I was ridin' on the square and now I'm on the level;
Serves me right for talkin' and pertendin' I was tough.

Riders of the Stars

"Ought to buy a rockin' chair! Git a pair of crutches!

Hear the boys a joshin' me now they got the chance;
Baldy's diggin' angle-worms with his nose! Now such is
Mighty childish joshin' . . . Say, 'fore you was wearin'
pants

"I was ridin' broncs and did n't have to pull no leather;
Broncs that pawed a star down every time they took a
jump.

And I wern't sixty-two them days; I did n't feel the
weather;

Give me forty year off and I'll lick you in a lump!

"Laugh, you movin'-picture kids; think *you're* punchin'
cattle?

I was raised in Texas where a steer is called a steer;
I have done some ridin' that would make your eye-teeth
rattle;

From the Tonto to Montana, ridin' range for forty year.

"Guess I got 'em thinkin' now — thinkin' strong and quiet,
Mad at *them*? Why, stranger, I'm a ole-time buckaroo,
Don't git mad at nothin'. . . If they're livin' let 'em try it,
Ridin' range and ropin' when they're turned of sixty-
two."

THE FIGHTING PARSON

HE was a right good man — a parson, too;
Deep-chested, tall, and straight. He had an eye
You could n't get away from; kind and blue,
And wise to all it saw; just like the sky

Out here in Arizona, — always clear,
Or mostly clear. Of course, sometimes it rained;
But if the fighting parson shed a tear,
The peace he lost, some other fellow gained.

The parson sometimes had to use his hands,
And save his wind to finish up a fight.
He did n't just stand up and give commands
In settling what was wrong and what was right;

He backed his words in good two-fisted style,
And never quit until the job was done.
Yes, he could shoot and ride, get licked, and smile
As easy after as when he begun.

But mighty few could handle him, at that;
He was all man — religion it came next.
If talking would n't do, off came his hat
And coat — and then his double-barreled text.

Riders of the Stars

Once he got licked — the only time I know.

It kind of scared us, seeing him go down,
Dropped by a lightning smash from Placer Joe
Who just rode in to salivate the town.

“If that’s the best you got,” said Placer Joe,
“Go rope a real one somewhere.” No one spoke
Until the fighting parson, rising slow,
Brushed off his clothes, just like it was a joke;

“No, not the best,” he said, “and not the worst;
Perhaps I was mistaken in my plan;
We’ll try again, but let me tell you first,
You have n’t whipped religion; just a man.

“What if I’m whipped again? That’s not the end.
What if you kill me and my spirit sped
Up to my Master? Let me tell you, friend,
He’ll send as good, or better, in my stead.”

That staggered Joe. He had n’t thought of that;
And something seemed to kill his wish to fight.
He grinned and fumbled foolish with his hat,
And said, “By Gosh, I guess the parson’s right!”

The parson was n’t licked, at that, but hid
The knock-down — having better in his hand . . .
They made him Bishop, sir, and when they did,
We lost the finest parson in the land.

ROMANCE

No more, no more my blithe Romance
Along the outland trails shall dance;
And nevermore in sweet surprise
And swift, shall she make glad mine eyes,
Singing along the harbor slips
With coaxing laughter on her lips.

No more the joy of ranging spars,
The stinging drift, the wind-swept stars,
The shouting storm, the foam-flecked sea
Shall thrill the weary soul of me.
No more the flame of woodland fires
Shall warm my heart with far desires.

Lost mesa-reaches, hills of night,
Soft Southern eyes with love alight
And longing; lips that now are mute
Once singing to the magic lute;
Lost in the stealth of years, and fled,
Leaving their silent ghosts, instead.

The thunder-roll, the blind stampede;
The shout, the shot, the falling steed . . .
Scarlet serape, silver spur,
Belt and sombrero worn for her

Riders of the Stars

Loyally — for my goddess who
Replaced the laurel with the rue.

The drifting herd, the blinding noon,
Scant cedar-shade and lazy croon
Of Andalusian cadence old . . .
Dawn — and the valley brimmed with gold!
Mañana — and the dreamy days
Out where the prairie ponies graze.

.
Crouched where the morning sunlight gleams,
Gaunt at my feet my wolf-dog dreams;
Yea! and I dream here, lone, forlorn,
Who once in red adventure's morn
Wakened with Romance at my side,
To touch her lips — long since denied.

And still I love her, ever young,
Youth following — with his songs unsung,
Eyes brave with hope, heart strong and pure,
While lissome fingers, beckoning, lure . . .
Youth following where her steps may wend,
Nor dreaming that the trail must end.

I KNEW A BOY

I KNEW a boy who, at the pasture gate,
Shouted and laughed to see the ponies run;
A barefoot urchin, sturdy, live, elate,
Who rode them all — the worst and best — for fun.

Was tumbled from the worst; stuck to the best
And loved them; yea! nor deemed the old rail fence
A barrier to dismount for, but made test;
Aptly the soul of "Whither going hence?"

Knew not nor cared no more than did his steed,
Unbitted, playful-wild, and ne'er in hand,
Till, breathless, in the pasture mullein-weed
They stopped; the "Whoa!" gratuitous command.

I knew a boy — perchance it was the same,
Though time had wrought its certain outward
change —
Who still — though seldom silent — played the game
With branding-iron and rope on Western range.

The clean, clear tan of sun upon his cheek,
The light of morning in his laughing eye;
Seeking adventure to the farthest peak,
Or watching dream-led cavalcades go by.

Riders of the Stars

Swiftly the golden shuttle of the dream
Darted across the loom of sunlit hours,
Till Romance, tiring of the weaver's beam,
Vanished among the nodding prairie-flowers.

The high trail dwindled in the sunset glow,
And laughter ceased; instead came Reverie
To pace beside him, silent, wan, and slow,
Until his wondering eyes beheld the sea.

Sadly he watched the gray gulls dip and ride
The swollen ridges rushing to the shore,
Then rise to wing across the sounding tide
That drummed a slow, reiterant "Nevermore."

Then something, that had slept throughout the years
Deep in his heart, awakened: "Nay! my joy
Shall not be tarnished by these futile tears,
Because" — he laughed — "because . . . I knew a
boy. . . ."

BRAVES OF THE HUNT

BRAVES! that go out with your guides and gold and the
polished tube of steel,

Playing safe with the hunting-pack, the trap and the
prism-glass;

Slaying the Moose or the Silver-tip, e'en as you pause and
kneel

Loosing the power that ye wield for shame. . . . So do
our monarchs pass.

Not for the hunger of babes ye hunt; for mother or aged
sire;

Not to the Red Gods offering the blood of your lust to kill;
Not with the strength of your brawn and thew matching
the fury-fire

Of the beast that fights for the life it loves; nay! but with
sneaking skill

Ye speed the sting of the spreading slug, giving your lust a
name;

Sport! to shatter the buoyant life, to sever the silver
thread!

Then ye stand with a gun in hand grinning your pictured
shame;

"See at my feet the mighty thing that I, yea, that *I* struck
dead!"

Riders of the Stars

When ye have toiled on the foot-worn trail till the hunger-
pinch is keen;

When ye have stood as a man with men earning your
wage through strife

Of the outland ways, ye have fair excuse to kill — an the
kill be clean;

Then, perchance, will the vaunt be lost in fostering life
with life.

Sport! to slay with no cause to slay — not even the pride of
hate!

Courage? then stand to an even chance, facing a foe-
man's gun

Out in the open, eye to eye, for Honor of Kin or State,

Oh, ye who slink in the woven blind seeking to kill — for
fun!

Would that ye lay by the wounded thing that crawls to the
brush to die;

Would that ye knew the biting pain and that lingering
thirst of hell,

Writhing down to the darksome pit as ye vainly implored
the sky,

Asking It if there once was God that made ye and loved
ye well!

Perhaps, when the Hand that fashioned all shall strike, and
the earth be dumb

Braves of the Hunt

Out of the dim and the voiceless vast — back to their
own again —

Herd and band and the mated beasts, fearless and free shall
come,

Knowing naught of the ancient fear of a tribe that were
named as men.

THE TRAIL-MAKERS

NORTH and west along the coast among the misty islands,
Sullen in the grip of night and smiling in the day:
Nunivak and Akutan, with Nome against the highlands,
On we drove with plated prow agleam with frozen spray.

*Loud we sang adventuring and lustily we jested;
Quarreled, fought, and then forgot the taunt, the blow, the
jeers;
Named a friend and clasped a hand — a compact sealed, at-
tested;
Shared tobacco, yarns, and drink, and planned surpass-
ing years.*

Then — the snow that locked the trail where famine's
shadow followed
Out across the blinding white and through the stabbing
cold,
Past tents along the tundra over faces blotched and hol-
lowed;
Toothless mouths that babbled foolish songs of hidden
gold.

Wisdom, lacking sinews for the toil, gave o'er the trying;
Fools, with thews of iron, blundered on and won the
fight;

The Trail-Makers

Weaklings drifted homeward; else they tarried — worse
than dying —

With the painted lips and wastrels on the edges of the
night.

Those of us who found the gold we followed with the others,
Dazzled by the glamour of the halls and women's eyes;
When the poke was empty, then we borrowed from another's,
Till a grim repentance called us out to face the skies.

Berries of the saskatoon were ripening and falling;
Flowers decked the barren with its timber scant and low;
All along the river-trail were many voices calling,
And e'en the whimpering Malemites they heard —
and whined to go.

Eyelids seared with fire of ice and frosted parka-edges;
Firelight like a spray of blood on faces lean and brown;
Shifting shadows of the pines across our loaded sledges,
And far behind the fading trail, the lights and lure of
town.

So we played the bitter game nor asked for praise or pity:
Wind and wolf they found the bones that blazed out
lonely trails . . .
Where a dozen shacks were set, to-day there blooms a city;
Now, where once was empty blue, there pass a thousand
sails.

Riders of the Stars

Scarce a peak that does not mark the grave of those who
perished

Nameless, lost to lips of men who followed, gleaning
fame

From the soundless triumph of adventurers who cherished
Naught above the glory of a chance to play the game.

Half the toil — and we had won to wealth in other station;
Rusted out as useless ere our worth was tried and known,
But the Hand that made us caught us up and hewed a na-
tion

From the frozen fastness that so long was His alone.

.
Loud we sang adventuring and lustily we jested;

*Quarreled, fought, and then forgot the taunt, the blow, the
jeers;*

*Sinned and slaved and vanished — we, the giant-men who
wrested*

*Truth from out a dream wherein we planned surpassing
years.*

IDLE NOON

Do you remember the camp we made as we nooned on the
mesa-floor,

Where the grass rolled down like a running sea in the
wind — and the world our own?

You laughed as you sat in the cedar-shade and said 't was
the ocean-shore

Of an island lost in the wizardry of dreams for ourselves
alone.

Our ponies grazed in the drowsy noon, unsaddled, at ease
and slow,

And the ranges dim were a faëryland; blue hills in a haze
of gray . . .

Hands clasped on knee you hummed a tune, a melody light
and low:

Do you remember the venture planned in jest — for
your heart was gay?

“We'll saddle and ride to the unknown end of the long,
long trail ahead . . .

Sun and wind and the evening star and the flame of our
evening fire;

Wherever the mesa-trail may wend we'll follow and find,”
you said,

“Haunted hills that are lost afar and the Valley of
Heart's Desire.”

Riders of the Stars

“ Ride to the last grim cañon edge and rest on the brim of
space;

‘ Find a trail to its very heart that only the eagles know;
Sing as we round the riven ledge that is hewn in its mighty
face

That gazes down on the silver strand of a stream and the
pines below.

“ Love we’ll leave till the quest is o’er and live in a magic
land;

Homeless, free as the fearless wind that runs o’er the
mountain towers,
And the upland lake, with its trackless shore, shall mirror a
woman’s hand

And a woman’s face as she bends to bind a fillet of purple
flowers.”

Thus you sang as the ponies grazed through the heat of that
idle noon,

While you dreamed of a faëryland; dreamed till the sun-
set fire

Called you back to the world, amazed that the journey
should end so soon,

As so must ever a venture planned to the Valley of
Heart’s Desire.

THE COWBOYS' BALL

(With a change of tune)

Yip! Yip! Yip! Yip! tunin' up the fiddle;

You an' take yo'r pardner there, standin' by the wall!
Say "How!" make a bow, and sashay down the middle;
Shake yo'r leg lively at the Cowboys' Ball.

Big feet, little feet, all the feet a-clickin';

Everybody happy and the goose a-hangin' high;
Lope, trot, hit the spot, like a colt a-kickin';
Keep a stompin' leather while you got one eye.

Yah! Hoo! Larry! would you watch his wings a-floppin',
Jumpin' like a chicken that is lookin' for its head;
Hi! Yip! Never slip, and never think of stoppin',
Just keep yo'r feet a-movin' till we all drop dead!

High heels, low heels, moccasins and slippers;
Real ole rally 'round the dipper and the keg!
Uncle Ed's gettin' red — had too many dippers;
Better get him hobbled or he'll break his leg!

Yip! Yip! Yip! Yip! tunin' up the fiddle;

Pass him up another for his arm is gettin' slow.
Bow down! right in town — and sashay down the middle;
Got to keep a-movin' for to see the show!

Riders of the Stars

Yes, mam! Warm, mam? Want to rest a minute?

Like to get a breath of air lookin' at the stars?

All right! Fine night. — Dance? There's nothin' in it!

That's my pony there, peekin' through the bars.

Bronc, mam? No, mam! Gentle as a kitten!

Here, boy! Shake a hand! Now, mam, you can see;

Night's cool. What a fool to dance, instead of sittin'

Like a gent and lady, same as you and me.

Yip! Yip! Yip! Yip! tunin' up the fiddle;

Well, them as likes the exercise sure can have it all!

Right wing, lady swing, and sashay down the middle . . .

But this beats dancin' at the Cowboys' Ball.

PEARL OF THE ATOLLS

*Where coral atolls glimmered in the sun;
Where the slow sea gave back our weary sails,
We came to anchor. Long had been the run
And welcome was the rest from ocean-trails.*

*Like a lone sea-bird in the blue lagoon,
Our schooner idle swung, while overside,
Long, broken masts lay wavering in a moon
Of moving silver mirrored on the tide.*

*The woven hut that fronted on the sand;
The crimson parakeets, the languorous fronds;
The laughter of the girls as hand-in-hand
They ran to bathe among the lily-ponds.*

*We bartered with the natives for their pearls,
And gained them all save one dark pearl alone,
Jewel among those dusky village girls;
Pearl of the atolls, love had made mine own.*

*When fortune turned those golden days to gold,
Lost voices called across the flickering foam;
Again adown the trails our schooner rolled,
Back to the ancient harbor we called home.*

Pearl of the Atolls

*Home? Years again we sought that magic shore,
With wide sea-wings alert for every breeze,
But vanished was our island-dream of yore,
Lost in the wide and unremembering seas.*

*Oh, magic island, where, oh, where are ye?
Sweet laughter, alien song and voices sweet?
Pearl of the atolls, rise from out the sea
That answers not — and make the dream complete!*





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